


MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

A TIGER HUNT IN JAVA.

(*Extracted from the "Ceylon Observer."*)

HE slaughter which takes place among the cattle of Java, Sumatra and Bali, through tigers, panthers and wild dogs, is greater than is supposed. In remote, thinly populated districts, children (not small ones) and even full grown persons are killed by the royal tiger, and now and then similar cases occur in more inhabited places. Even here, in the neighbourhood of Sinagar (below Soekaboemi, Preanger), a thickly populated and almost entirely cleared district, I have had the sad experience that, in a short time, one can lose much cattle, horses and sheep through wild beasts.

In the first four years of my residence here, before I had become acquainted with the use of tiger poisons, I lost in this manner 14 horses and *karbouws*.* Since then also I have not been exempt ; but by employing the poison which I am about to describe the loss of cattle has gradually decreased.

The poison which was employed by me is a yellowish brown powder, obtained from the bark of a climbing plant called *wali kambing*, found in the low marshy regions along the coasts of Java (among others near Tangerang, in the Bantam province and near Wijnkoopsbaai).

In FILET'S *Plantkundig Woordenboek voor Nederlandsch Indie* (Leyden, GUALTH KOLFF, 1876) the plant is referred to under No. 8,705 :—“ *Wali kambing* j. *Sarcolobus spanoghei* miq. Nat. ord. of the *Asclepiadææ* ; loc. Java ; creeper. This plant, with others of the same family, is employed to intoxicate boars, tigers and other

* Buffaloes.

animals for fighting ; if the animal is not wounded it dies of this poison ; but if it receives a wound which draws blood it recovers."

What the writer means exactly by "to intoxicate for fighting" is not quite clear to me. If one were to use *wali kambing* for a tiger intended for a *rampok** exhibition, the animal would be made quite useless for the purpose, for it would become uneasy, gradually less active, and finally paralysed.

Among the "other plants of the same family" the *Sarcolobus globosus* is apparently also referred to.

As to what FILET says of restoration by bleeding, this statement agrees with what is said in RIGG's *Sundanese Dictionary*, p. 527 (Batavia, LANGE & Co., 1865) :—"The root is bruised and mixed up with rice or other food, and placed in the way of wild pigs, which, after eating it, become insensible and torpid ; but on bleeding them they recover." †

The idea of bleeding wild pigs is more or less strange ; but it must be assumed that the operation is to be performed not with lancet or fleam but with *gollok* ‡ or *klewang* § and not for any definite surgical purpose.

* *Rampog*. To spear animals for amusement ; a circle of men is formed, each man being armed with a spear, and whenever the animal comes at the ring, he is received on the spears. The native chiefs have exhibitions on their *alun-aluns* of this kind of public amusement. The tiger is the animal practised upon, which is uncaged in the midst for that purpose.—RIGG'S *Sundanese Dict.*

† We give the context of the extract at follows :—" *Wali-kambing*.—Name of the liane growing along some parts of the low coasts of Java. It is found, amongst other places, near the coast from the mouth of the Chidani towards Bantam. The root is bruised and mixed up with boiled rice or other food and placed in the way of wild pigs, which, after eating it, become insensible and torpid, but on bleeding them they recover. It is called *Péler kambing* about Batavia. Wali, C. [CLOUGH'S *Sinhalese Dictionary*] 628, wild, living in the wood. 'The fruit of a species of *Contorta* called *Kalak-kambing*, has a deadly effect on tigers. It is prepared by the admixture of other vegetables, and exposed on a piece of rag at the places frequented by them. In some districts their number has been sensibly diminished by this poison.' Horsfield. *Raffles' Java*, vol. 1, p. 347. It would thus appear that a vegetable preparation known by somewhat different names, but all terminating in *kambing*, goat or sheep, has a deleterious effect upon wild animals and is in different parts of Java used for the purpose of stupefying wild beasts."

‡ Cutlass. [Chopper.—*Ed.*]

§ Sword.

The statement of Mr. RIGG, that "the root is bruised," is less exact. Although poisonous properties are found in the whole plant, the substance which is used for poisoning is obtained from the innermost bark of the stem. The fine outermost bark is first scraped away: even that of the smallest twigs can be used. The *wali kambing* is a plant with whiteish stem and leaves of the same colour. It is said that the fruits can be eaten with impunity. They taste like unripe papaya and have a peculiar shape, from which the *wali kambing* borrows another name. This name, however, for decency's sake, I shall not give.

It may be true that poisoned animals recover by the drawing of blood, but I can neither confirm nor contradict the statement, nor can I give any information as to the effect of the poison under notice on pigs.

It still requires much trouble and expense to obtain good *wali kambing* here, so that I have used the poison only for tigers and wild dogs.

A bitch of an European cross, in pup, was poisoned a couple of years ago, at Ardjasairi, through having partaken only too freely of the carcase of a buffalo prepared for tigers. The dog vomited much, became gradually paralysed, and remained lying three or four days stiff and as if lifeless; it then recovered slowly, and in due course brought into the world half-a-dozen healthy pups, which did not suffer in any way.

I imagine, therefore, though I cannot say it with certainty, that in some cases, when the tiger has not swallowed much of the poison, it may recover from the effects. I know of cases, however, where without doubt poisoned flesh was eaten by a tiger, and yet no trace was to be found of the patient.

In the *Maandblad voor Natuurwetenschappen*, 8th year, No. 3, is a paper by Mr. BOSCHA JZN., Phil. Nat. Cand., "On the Poisonous constituent of *Sarcobolus spanoghei* miq."

The writer therein details the method and the result of his chemical investigation of a quantity of *wali kambing* sent to him for that purpose by me, and sums up his opinion as follows:—"I consider, from the corresponding indications of the physiological

effect, the smell, and the chemical reactions, that I can pronounce with perfect certainty the poisonous matter of the *Sarcolobus spanoghei* to be coniine.”

Coniine is the alkaloid to which is ascribed the poisonous nature of the hemlock or *Conium maculatum*—the plant, with the juice of which, according to historical tradition, SOCRATES was put to death.

In the *Natuurkundig Tijdschrift voor Nederl. Indie*, part 15, p. 478, also will probably appear a report on the value and effect of the *wali kambing*. I regret that I cannot here make use of that aper, the more so as it is from the hands of our able chemist and quinologist BERNELOT MOENS and his now deceased brother.

It is known to the people in the neighbourhood here that, as soon as a head of a cattle has been carried off by a tiger, information is at once to be conveyed to me of the fact. I then send persons who are accustomed to make their way through jungle and waste, well armed, to the place where the slaughter has taken place, and the carcass is by them strewn over with poison (for a buffalo a beer glass three-fourths filled is sufficient; for a sheep or goat much less is needed); they are armed, because the tiger is sometimes found to come back again to his prey very quickly. My brother at Ardjasiri went himself two years ago to poison a sheep which had the previous night been taken by a royal tiger out of the fold in the middle of the factory *kampong*, and carried away close to his house through the middle of his vegetable garden. (*N. B.*—The door of the fold, made of plaited bamboo, to which the sheep had been fastened, was dragged by the tiger for some distance.) In the course of the day it was discovered where the tiger had concealed the sheep. Then my brother, at about 5 in the afternoon, forced his way through the high *glagah* * to the place where the sheep lay, he found the tiger already there, which was busy preparing to carry the sheep further into the interior.

The thick cane brake rendered impossible a good shot at the beast of prey, which with amazing springs escaped from the bullet intended for it. The sheep was thereupon carefully prepared,

* The grass *saccharum spontaneum*,

and the following morning at 6 o'clock no trace of it was to be found except a few bloody flocks of wool. Although the whole neighbourhood was up to 2 o'clock the same day thoroughly searched and traced, neither then nor afterwards was anything seen of the tiger.

To prepare the carcase properly, long cuts are made in the fleshiest parts, which are closed again after *wali kambing* has been strewn in them. Of a buffalo, the neck, loins, groin and thighs are the parts most liked by the tiger. The ears also are usually found eaten off.

From the condition in which buffaloes and horses killed by tigers are found, it is to be inferred that horses, colts and young buffaloes are seized sideways or from in front, after which the throat is bitten through. The tiger seizes full-grown horned buffaloes generally by one of the legs, which must then, on account of the desperate efforts of the victim to release itself, be held fast with terrible strength. Skin and flesh are often found under the claws of the tiger, cut in a circular form from the leg. With a stroke of the claw in the groin of the buffalo the belly of the strong beast is torn open, and then, defenceless from pain and loss of blood, it is dispatched. Wild dogs also hunt and seize cattle from behind. On cows which have managed to escape from a troop of wild dogs, I have seen the traces of the fearful bites of these beasts, whole pieces of the flesh being torn from the hinder part of the belly.

A carcase which has been already eaten from during one night or even three, and which then swarms with maggots, is still suitable for poisoning, as the tiger (as also dogs even) is not unwilling to have his game in the condition I found set forth in a French work on pheasants:—"Pour manger un bon faisan, il faut qu'il change de place tout seul."

After having seasoned the titbit, the surrounding population must be warned to keep their dogs fast tied up, or they would otherwise feast themselves on what was not meant for them. On the following day early in the morning, it must be ascertained by means of persons sent whether any of the carcase has been eaten,

and an endeavour must also be made to prevent many people coming to have a peep at the carcase ; as though the tiger is not specially timid at night, I have known of cases where, on account of the traces of numerous visitors during the day, the tiger has found it unadvisable to return at night.

With properly armed and trained hunters, and also with dogs, one can trace, when some of the bait has been eaten, the direction taken by the tiger, but this is often difficult and sometimes fruitless.

The almost entirely inaccessible and densely overgrown spot which the tiger chooses for his "*kraton*"* makes it extremely fatiguing for Europeans to track him ; but, hard though it be, it is a possibility to find a poisoned tiger ; to track a healthy tiger is, in my opinion, except by a stroke of good luck, a hopeless task.

The well-known tiger hunts of the English in Bengal are mostly carried out in an entirely different kind of country. There are, as a rule, extensive plains with comparatively moderate undulations. The *jungles* (thick canebrake and scrub) and the *nullahs* (small ravines, in which a rivulet or brook meanders and which are sometimes also overgrown) offer little hindrance to the hunter, who places himself, with some good weapons, some bottles of soda-water, and the invariable "cheroots" in a so-called *howdah* on the back of the elephant, with a *mahout* to guide the animal. The fearless, sharp-sighted elephants do duty as beaters, and so the tigers, roused by a long row of elephants and huntsmen, are shot down from above from the moving *pangung*.†

Even if we had here trained elephants, they would be useless in Java (except on occasional plains here and there), and especially so in the steep thickly wooded ravines of the greater part of the Preanger.

After prolonged drought, tracking is naturally more difficult than in wet weather, when the ground shows the trace of the game more plainly. If it is not found plentifully near the carcase, an

* Palace.

† Elevated stage, platform, watch-tower.

attempt must be made to "cut the track," that is search in a wide circle round the place where the game has been and across his track.

If one has good dogs, which are by no means to be had everywhere, they may be utilised (only not close to the tempting smell of the bait). The dogs will probably not attack the tiger, they will generally not dare to go far from the hunter, but they will point out the presence of the game to him if he is acquainted with their habits.

If one is on the right track, vomited flesh and other strongly smelling tokens of the tiger's sickness are found. Sometimes the patient is found dead; sometimes, two days after the eating of the poisoned flesh, still quite ready for the fight. Sometimes also healthy tigers are found keeping company with the sick one; and it is therefore necessary always to exercise the greatest caution. If one comes upon steep declivities caution is still more needful, for the radius of a tiger's spring in a downward direction is much greater than on a flat or in an upward direction.

I once tried to shoot a tiger-panther which was lying above me against a steep declivity, through the head. The bullet went through his ear, and with a spring and a terrific snarl the raging beast stood crouched at my feet. Only by the good help of a troop of dogs did I escape from the claws of the *wali-kambing-ed toetoel*. *

Already, since the beginning of 1863, forty head of royal tigers and panthers and a large number of wild dogs have thus been destroyed by me and my hunters: and by my brother at Ardjasari near Bandoeng, whom I had provided with *wali kambing*, two panthers and six royal tigers.

In 1875, my brother at Ardjasari sent a descriptive narrative of a tiger hunt to his absent wife.

Although this account was not written for public perusal, it seemed to me so suited to be appended in a supplement to my paper

* "*Tutul*.—Spotted, marked with spots or blotches. *Maung tutul*, the spotted tiger, a panther."—RIGG'S *S. D.*

intended for your journal, as a rather more highly coloured illustration than that paper is, that I sought and obtained the permission of the writer to do so.

The portion of the letter referred to is as follows :—

“ You remember the tract of land which is still wholly uninhabited above our plantation, a little below the edge of the forest that covers the Malabar; where we breakfasted a couple of years ago with our guests H. and C. under a clump of bamboos, which served as a tent from the sun? Early in the morning it looked somewhat less sunny and gay than when we made a little fire to boil the water for our coffee; when seats were placed in a circle round a camp table, and the ladies of our company unpacked boxes rich in promise: and when there was such merry chat and laughter, whilst all eyes feasted themselves on the prospect over the sunny expanse of Bandjara.

“ In the early morning of 2nd February, 1875, it was wet and cold, it had rained the whole night, and thick clouds, from which still fell steadily a fine chill drizzle, hung gray and chill and heavy over the erstwhile charming landscape.

“ On an open patch between the belts lay a dead *karbouw*, fearfully torn and mangled, and a group of thirty living buffaloes stood in melancholy, pensive attitude. What was going on in the buffalo-heads could be gathered by the glance of an eye. The silent beasts were thinking of their deadly enemy, the tiger, who the night before had fallen upon and killed one of their brethren, and who had come back that night to feast on his prey. An old, melancholy, staring buffalo cow, perhaps mother or aunt of the one so cruelly slain, sniffed in Buffalese to the bull standing nearest to her: ‘Hodie mihi, cras tibi!’ and the bull shook his terrible horns angrily, as if he would say: ‘I would that he would try conclusions with me for once!’

“ But see! there comes more life in the misty sombre landscape. Horses are heard splashing through a stream (you know the stream into which H. let his shoes fall when he was wading barefoot through the water, so as not to spoil the patent leather), and out of the fog a hunting train appears: in front is the *djoera-*

*gan** Ardjasari, whom you know, armed with his heavy Forsyth gun, called by the natives '*si mariam*' (the cannon); following him the '*djoeragan gamboeng*' with a clean-shooting central-fire smooth-bore hunting-piece, then several *mandoers*, † SETRA, ALSAH, ALIMON, HASSIM, &c., with less choice firearms, among which are seen some with the barrel bound to the butt and stock with rattan; lastly, ASPAN our cowkeeper, armed with a lance. The horses of the two first-named were led by hand in the rear by a pair of stable-boys.

"The 'file' now appears to become aware of the murder of the buffalo; it mounts and descends, seeks its way through the belts, and at length reaches the place where the murdered *karbouw* lies. The brothers and friends of the slain go respectfully to one side.

"From another direction other men appear; they are descendants of the followers of Confucius, THIO TEN DJOELONG and his son, both with guns, besides the owner of the massacred beast with a number of the inhabitants of the *babakan* ‡ Tji-Enggang bearing no other weapons but the inseparable *gollok*.

"All the men examine the dead buffalo earnestly and carefully, and find to their satisfaction that the tiger, in spite of the rainy weather, has eaten greedily of his prey, which, by order, of *djoeragan* Ardjasari, had the previous evening been well spiced, not with *moutarde de maille*, or with Worcester sauce, but with (you know) the fearful *wali kambing*. After some consultation, a commencement was made with the difficult, to us at first apparently almost hopeless, task of tracking the murderer on this

* "*Juragan*.—A headman or leader in any way. A petty district Chief, the Chief native or Headman on the private estates, who has charge of the police. A headman in a boat. Compounded of *Juru*, an overseer, one who presides over or acts in any department of business, and *Ageng*, Chief, though in the compound word the final *g* is hardly ever heard."—RIGG'S *S. D.*

† "*Mandor*.—A native headman, a village chief. A foreman over work. It is the Portuguese *Mandhore*, to command."—RIGG'S *S. D.*

‡ "*Babakan*.—A sub-village; a village whose inhabitants have originally come off as a colony from some other village, as it were peeled off, as we might say swarmed when speaking of bees."—RIGG'S *S. D.*

sodden grass-grown tract. They do indeed find, at a distance of a couple of paces, vomited blood and mucus, but nothing besides this is to be found on the ground, which has been washed thoroughly during the night. Several *kampong* dogs which have been brought soon show themselves, as nearly always is the case, to be not worth their salt; they run unconcernedly, after their masters, and soon everyone is convinced that if they were not tied fast they would in a trice give themselves a frightful indigestion with the remains of the tiger table.

“ The 14 hunters now disperse to examine the tract patiently and carefully in all directions. One of the natives has had the luck to see imprinted on an overgrown spot the footprint of the tiger; he goes in the direction towards which the claw points, finding now and then an unsavory indication, and at length stops at the edge of the densely overgrown steep ravine of the *kali* * Tji Enggang, on a place where the tiger appears to have lain awhile, and where he must have felt very unwell, as evidently appears from a great mass of vomited flesh. Hurrah! hurrah! the trace is found. The scattered company is called together; two of the most experienced trackers are sent on in front; *Djoeragan* A. S. follows; his son pushes near to him through the brushwood that covers the steep slippery declivity of the ravine, in order to press his father once more fervently to his breast: ‘ that in God’s name he would be cautious!’ the cocks of the guns are heard uttering a threatening ‘ tick-tack ’ as they are pulled up, and the long row goes forward descending slopingly along the edge of the ravine (in a southern direction or up-stream), led by the two trackers, who now and then receive an admonition not to be over-hasty and rather to wait a little when they might be in doubt.

“ With the exception of several high but widely scattered trees, this tract was covered with various kinds of brushwood, different varieties of bamboo, and in many places thick with *Honjeh* † and

* A brook, river.

† “ *Honjé*.—A scitameneous plant, formerly called *Geanthus speciosus*, but nowadays called *Elettaria*. The fruit grows on a stalk by itself and forms a large round collection of nuts or pulpy seeds. Used by the mountaineers in cooking in place of Tamarind for the sake of its acidulous properties.”—RIGG’S *S. D.*

Tepoes * (varieties of *Elettaria*), among which the *alang-alang* and other grasses were mostly choked ; it was therefore certainly thickly shaded, but as a rule one could see to a distance of 10 to 15 paces of himself, with the exception of rougher spots, everywhere intervening, woven throughout with various creepers. The best of this tract for our hunt consisted in this, that the tiger's tracks were easier to find here in the soft clay and rotting layer of leaves than above on the buffalo pasture. Here and there the *golloks* had to be taken in hand to clear a passage for us. Steepness, slipperiness and foot-entangling roots here gave the most trouble. Now and then the leaders lost the trace and all had to come up and look right and left for the right trace again. The tiger had taken a peculiar road : first southwards up-stream ; next straight down towards the *kali*, apparently to drink ; after that again northwards down-stream. With stubborn patience the *file indienne* of hunters followed through the dripping branches, until, after an hour and a half we saw footprints so fresh that, the particles of earth seemed not yet to have settled down ; we also again found vomited flesh, etc., so that we had the certainty, that the right trace was not lost (among other tiger tracks).

“ We had forced our way through a patch somewhat overgrown with *glagah*, when the foremost man had suddenly stood still imagining he heard rustling through the foliage ; here the trace unexpectedly diverged somewhat to the right ; the file of the hunters was somewhat broken in the search for the new trace, R. and the *mandoers* and other natives with him formed a sort of right-wing ; ASPAN the cowherd and *Baba DJOELONG* went in front ; I was No. 3 of the file. *Baba* was a pace or so in front of me, when I saw him lift his gun. The report of the explosion in the thick jungle mingled with the fierce and to us delightful roar of the tiger found at last. I spring hastily forward, catch a glimpse through the bushes of part of the back and shoulder of the enemy creeping up towards an eminence, black cross-stripes on a yellowish ground—and the deep voice of ‘ *si mariam.*’

* *Tepus*.—A scitameneous plant, *Geanthus coccineus*.—RIGG'S *S. D.*

(96 grains of powder per ball) is heard twice, accompanied by the renewed roar of the tiger.

“ Whilst I am busy putting a couple of fresh cartridges in my breech-loader, fire bursts from the right wing, led by R., who meanwhile has executed a flank movement on the enemy. Moving forward a few steps, I then managed to see the whole of the tiger, who is already lying on his back, but still motioning menacingly. All ten shots had struck, and fearful that the rug which I had promised you for your bedroom would be riddled like a sieve I ordered a cessation of fire and approached the tiger within about 12 paces. He was still living, showed me his formidable teeth, and contracted his claws convulsively. By general request I thereupon sent a ‘settler’ through the enemy’s head, who at once sank back powerless, whilst the contracted claws were immediately relaxed.

“ Then the natives raised a mad cry of delight. They yelled and fired salvoes of joy as long as they had powder; and whilst R. and I, seated on the decaying trunk of a tree overgrown with moss and ferns, smoked our cigarettes and divided our supply of tobacco amongst all our comrades of the chase, litter-poles of bamboo were cut and a rough sort of rope made from split rattan.

“ We confessed to each other (R. and J.), that this result of the hunt far exceeded our expectation; for when in the morning we got on our horses in the rain and rode up more or less numbed, with the prospect of all traces being washed away, the hope was certainly very small.

“ In descending the mountain we marched, with the tiger carried by four men in front, in the manner of a triumphal procession through the Tji Enggang *kampoeng*, where lives the owner of the herd of *karbouws*, so many of which had been eaten up by tigers (you know that a week or so ago one of our buffaloes also, which was bought for f52, shared the fate).

“ Wasn’t there joy in Tji-Enggang!

“ As we neared home, a corps of nine or ten *angklong** players met us, for the winged rumor had already preceded us and to the playing of *angklongs* a circuit of the factory was made, at which the natives became fearfully excited.

“ You are sure to remember that mad *gegil* † of that time when I came to the house with a *toetoeel* which had stolen a calf from us.

“ When the tiger was laid in our front verandah between the two middle columns, the court was black with men. Good presents were made to all the hunters and trackers, and the *angklong* players also were not forgotten.

“ This is the history of the rug which is to lie in your bedroom.

(Sd.) R. A. KERKHOVEN.

“ Ardjasari, 2nd Feb., 1875.”

I hope that the above particulars, while they may be thought worthy of a mission to the *Tijdschrift van Nijv. en Landbouw*, will convince the readers that for anyone who has the time and strength to devote to it, the *wali kambing* is an excellent means for getting rid of a number of tigers.

E. J. KERKHOVEN.

Sinagar, 9th July, 1875.

* “ *Angklong*.—A musical instrument made of bambus, cut off at the ends like the pipes of an organ, and being strung together on a frame, are shook to elicit their tones.”—RIGG'S *S. D.*

† Noise, *tamasha*.